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GLENDALÉ'S ELSIE MCCARTHY SENSORY GARDEN TO BE RE-DEDICATED NOVEMBER 14 *Improvements Coordinated by Disabilities Commission*

GLENDALÉ, Ariz. – The city of Glendale will hold a re-dedication event for the Elsie McCarthy Sensory Garden on Saturday, Nov. 14 at 9 a.m., following a series of improvement projects that have brought new life to the garden.

Over the past six months, the Commission on Persons with Disabilities has advocated to “spruce up” Elsie McCarthy Park, located at 7637 N. 55th Avenue. The installation of a new art project, new trees, new signage for the visually impaired, lighting and other amenities will be celebrated and the commission invites the public to attend and see the new amenities and changes.

One major component to the enhancements at the park is the art project. The city’s Arts Commission, through its FY 2014/15 Arts Projects Plan, created a summer project opportunity open to Arizona-based artists and non-profit arts organizations or schools. The call for proposals asked for project ideas that would engage Glendale teens in interactive visual arts activities during the summer. The commission selected the “The Fountain of Youth” project by Kristine Kollasch.

The project proposed to artistically revitalize the “Contemplation Garden” at the park, a round walled area with a fountain that no longer functioned. The project turned the dry fountain into a fountain-like planter with mosaic tiles created by the participating teens, and painting a mural on the interior round wall of the area. In collaboration with Free Arts For Abused Children of Arizona, the artist conducted 18, two-hour workshops this past summer, involving teens ages 13-17 from two group homes. As part of the design process, the artist engaged the teens in discussions about the potential of youth and the dreams for the future. Over the course of the workshops, the teens designed and created more than 1,000 unique mosaic tiles as they worked with the artist to design the planter and the concept for the mural wall.

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Elsie McCarthy/ ADD 1.1.1

The additional improvements to the park and garden included new signage that offers a unique interpretive experience along the accessible pathway, both in print and braille; pathway enhancements such as concrete curbing and additional decomposed granite for a more compact surface area; new park benches and trash receptacles, plus refurbishment of existing benches; enhanced landscape covering to improve overall appearance, with new roses planted and mulch added; and finally, added trees with color and fragrance.

The Elsie McCarthy Sensory Garden was created in 2001; its namesake was a long-time Valley resident and an avid gardener. She continued her gardening throughout her life even after she lost her eyesight. Through a bequest in McCarthy's will, she donated the money for "the purpose of establishing, purchasing, improving, expanding or maintaining a scented and tactile garden for the visually handicapped." Her only requirement was that the garden be dedicated to her father, Robert Henry Bourdon. The main entry to the sensory garden contains a tactile map, giving the visually impaired a way to feel the individual areas of the garden and understand its layout.

The garden is located at 7637 N. 55th Ave. For additional information on the garden, visit www.glendaleaz.com/parksandrecreation, or call 623-930-2820.

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